

Statement on Russian bounty intelligence provided to The New York Times by a National Security Council spokesperson:

- I'm not going to speak for the previous administration. What I can say is that we felt there was enough cause for concern based on the intelligence that Russia needs to provide an explanation.
- The United States Intelligence Community assesses with low to moderate confidence that Russian intelligence officers sought to encourage Taliban attacks against U.S. and coalition personnel in Afghanistan in 2019, and perhaps earlier, including through financial incentives and compensation.
- U.S. Intelligence Community agencies have low to moderate confidence in this judgment in part because it relies on detainee reporting and due to the challenging operating environment of Afghanistan.
- Our conclusion is based on information and evidence of connections between criminal agents in Afghanistan and elements of the Russian Government.
- We cannot confirm that the operation resulted in any attacks on U.S. or Coalition forces.
- We assess that a General Staff Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU) unit managed interaction with individuals in Afghan criminal network. The United States has high confidence in this assessment because we have independently verified the ties of several individuals in this network to Russia.
- Multiple sources have confirmed that elements of this criminal network worked for Russian intelligence for over a decade and travelled to Moscow in April 2019.
- We have a strong body of evidence of the activities of this GRU unit. This GRU unit has been involved in other nefarious operations around the world against our allies and partners, including a plot to violently disrupt Montenegro's legislative election in 2016, the attempted assassination of former GRU officer Sergey Skripal in 2018, and assassinations across Europe.
- The involvement of this GRU unit is consistent with Russia encouraging attacks against U.S. and coalition personnel in Afghanistan given its leading role in such lethal and destabilizing operations abroad.
- The safety and well-being of U.S. military personnel, and that of our Allies and partners, is a matter of absolute highest U.S. National Security interest. Our men and women in uniform have defended our country from harm and promoted our interests and values around the world, and will continue to do so.

- Fighting terrorism and bringing peace to Afghanistan has been a top national security priority for almost a generation of U.S. military personnel, and far too many have made the ultimate sacrifice. These were risks inherent to our mission in Afghanistan following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Their losses are not forgotten.
- But what we cannot and will not accept is the targeting of our personnel by any elements including a foreign state actor.
- This information puts the burden on the Russian government to explain its actions and take steps to address this disturbing pattern of behavior. We do not have evidence that the Kremlin directed this operation, but we call on the Russian government to explain itself.
- The Biden Administration considers it essential to be transparent with the American people about what we know, and vital that we consult with our Allies and partners who were potentially targeted as well, about what we have uncovered.